

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative:

Request to Set Legislative Public Hearing Relating to the Text of the Carrboro Land Use Ordinance. The purpose of this agenda item is to request the Town Council consider setting a public hearing on text amendments to the Land Use Ordinance relating to water quality buffers, road buffers, fences, and setback variances.

Department: Planning

What are the racial and equity impacts?

Lack of representation, including on elected and appointed boards (advisory boards also provide comments for items that are considered by the Town Council at public hearings) by persons of color, persons of a range of incomes and life experiences can reduce participation. This may be especially prevalent for those who do not learn about these types of processes and/or are unable to participate in meetings. Without such involvement, there is a risk that decisions might be made without considering these points of view.

Who is or will experience community burden?

Persons who may have difficulty finding the time to learn about a proposal, attend meetings, have understanding and/or experiences about such public process, including how and when to provide input, and to whom may experience burdens related to this type of governmental action. Such persons could include but not be limited to shift workers and people who have limited time, people who experience barriers to accessing information in English, via digital platforms, people who utilize shared transportation choices, have children or others for whom they are responsible and/or children. It also takes time to learn about land use and development-related process and to reach a comfort level to participate.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

The public hearing process requires that these types of legislative decisions occur in a public form and that the community can comment before a decision is made. Beneficiaries include those who are able/available to and do participate in these ways and those who support or see no negative effects from the changes, and those who experience improved living, working and related conditions because of the amendments to Town regulations. Staff has identified these changes as needed to revise provisions, so they are clearer to all users, provide definitions and better match provisions in the North Carolina Administrative Code.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Structural racism in government decisions, particularly those relating to land use, as well as residents' personal experiences with government, can further alienate those who may find it difficult to attend meetings—like working individuals and families—and contribute to a reticence by historically marginalized people to speak in a public setting. Disparate access to education, which in turn affects economic outcomes, as well as historical barriers to participation in government actions and processes for community members based on race, ethnicity, age, and other characteristics can lead to undue burden.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

Changes to land use regulations can affect land values and quality of life experiences for surrounding property owners and occupants in ways that can be beneficial and, albeit for some, less desirable. The request for this text amendment would, if approved, clarify and update Town's land use regulations

relating to water quality buffers allowable uses and variances, road buffers, fence requirements and setbacks.

The public hearing process is intended to provide a way for developers and community members to learn about a proposal and provide input in a public setting. Even with published notice and social media releases, some people may not learn of a proposed amendment to the Land Use Ordinance in time to provide input and/or feel that that they understand the project and/or approval process enough to fully participate. The Planning Department has nearly completed a REAL for the text amendment process.

How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?

The department will continue to review and modify the ways in which planning processes are scoped and carried out. The department will work to prevent and remove requirements that result in new or perpetuate existing disparities based on race. The department will continue to evaluate the environmental justice and equity tools used in these processes to determine if they assist with improving and expanding engagement beyond the requirements associated with state law and the Town's authority to adopt and amend its land use regulations.